

HOW TO MAKE

# *Braided Rugs*

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## ASSEMBLE EQUIPMENT YOU NEED

Sharp shears

Gauge for folding strips:

    Ticking or other sturdy material for making gauge

    Linen, cotton, or nylon carpet thread (used also for sewing braids)

Coat hanger or metal to make hook for drawing strips through gauge

Mercerized threads to match fabrics

Needle, sturdy, with a large round eye, like No. 1 Viking needle;

    bodkins or rug lacers if you prefer to use them

Beeswax

Thimble

Pins, long and sturdy

Tape measure

Yardstick

Ironing board and iron—steam iron preferable

Sewing machine

Paper for pattern, such as garment bag or brown wrapping paper

Lead pencil and wax crayon or china black pencil

Large safety pins, 6

Small clamp or heavy cord to hold strips of material while braiding

Clamp clothespins, 2

Magazines or mailing tubes on which to roll strips of pressed material

Box or plastic bags to hold rolls of fabric



# HOW TO MAKE *Braided Rugs*

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Braided rugs add beauty, comfort, unity, and interest to a home, when their size, shape, and color fit the room and other furnishings. Well-made braided rugs lie flat and are firm to walk on.

The size of the rug should be in proportion to the room size; large, if it is to be the main rug in the room; smaller, if it is to be used in front of a hearth, or in a doorway, or to set off a group of furniture. If rugs do not have one of these functions, they will seem to be meaningless spots of color in a room.

You can braid a rug in the shape of an oval, circle, rectangle, or square, but you should choose a shape that will conform to the room and furniture with which it will be used. Oval rugs usually fit better in most rooms than do other shapes.

## SELECT COLORS

The colors you choose, and the way in which they are combined, help a braided rug fit into the room and look well on the floor. Choose those which will repeat or accent other colors in the room. For example, select colors from large areas such as floors and other floor coverings, walls, furniture, or fabrics. Repeat throughout the rug those colors you wish to emphasize. Border colors of the rug should blend closely with the floor.

A trend in contemporary design, and good basic planning, is the use of one or of few colors, and variations of these colors—light and dark (value), dull and bright (intensity). One color and value should dominate; other colors and values should be used in lesser amounts. Braiding similar colors and values helps to avoid conspicuous striped, wavy effects. Bright colors appear to come forward. For this reason, to make the rug "stay on the floor," use greyed colors for large areas and bright colors only as accents. One strand of a braid may be varied to add sparkle and variety.

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## SELECT FABRICS

About one pound of medium-weight wool material is needed for each square foot of rug. Three square yards of such fabric weighs about one pound. A cotton rug requires slightly more material. Strips three yards long make a braid about two yards long.

New and old materials may be used together in a rug, but all materials should be of similar fibers so they will braid easily and make an even rug. Choose those that will wear well; avoid sleazy fabrics.

Materials of about the same weight and thickness should be used throughout the rug to make uniform braids. Medium-weight fabrics are desirable. Often, thin materials make narrow braids that do not wear well, nor are rugs that are made of such braids apt to stay flat on the floor. Heavy materials make thick, wide, clumsy braids.

**Wool** fabrics make the best braided rugs. They are soft and resilient, wear well, hold their colors, wash well, and are easy to sew.

**Cotton** fabrics make a good rug but usually are not as soft or resilient as wool. Some cottons fade and soil readily; as a result, cotton rugs are often difficult to keep clean. Soft, pliable cottons are easier to sew than are firm ones. Cotton is usually less expensive than wool.

Plain materials are desirable; colors need not match exactly. Figured materials—stripes, checks, plaids, and floral designs—can be used. But, those with an all-over pattern or a dominating color are best.

Colors should be *fast* to sunlight and to washing or dry cleaning. If you dye materials, use colorfast dyes and follow directions carefully. (Braided wool rugs should be dry cleaned or shampooed.)

**Used materials.** Medium-weight fabrics from clothing and household textiles can be used:

### *Clothing:*

Suits, coats, pants, skirts  
Coat linings  
Bathrobes  
Overalls  
Heavy cotton aprons, dresses, shirts

### *Household textiles:*

Blankets, bedspreads, bed ticking  
Upholstery materials  
Draperies, chair and cushion covers  
Tablecloths  
Denim, burlap  
Feed and seed bags

Other sources for used materials are paper mills, junk dealers, rummage sales, and second hand clothing stores.

**New materials.** Yard goods and remnants can be purchased from clothing factories, jobbers, cotton or woolen mills, and mill-end shops.

## PREPARE FABRICS

Use only strong durable parts of old garments. Open or cut off seams, remove buttons, hooks, and other fasteners. Wash and press the material.

### Tear or cut cloth

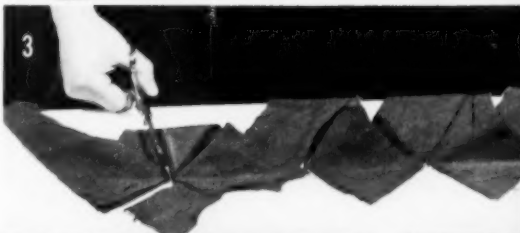
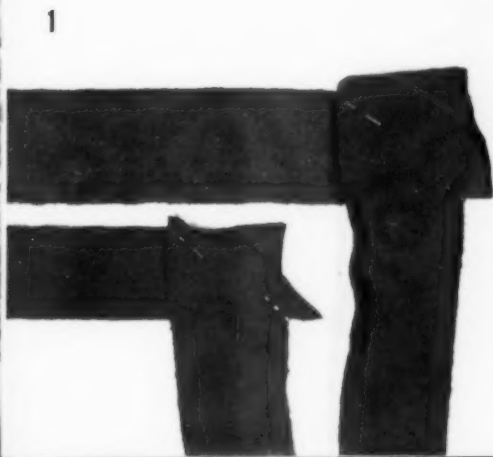
Tear the cloth, if you can easily, or mark with pencil or chalk, and cut. Tear or cut on the straight of the goods; fabric cut lengthwise is easier to fold than that cut crosswise.

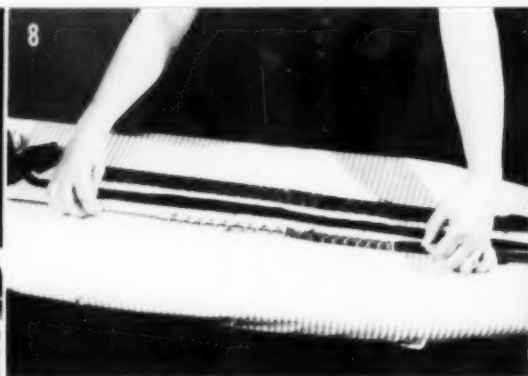
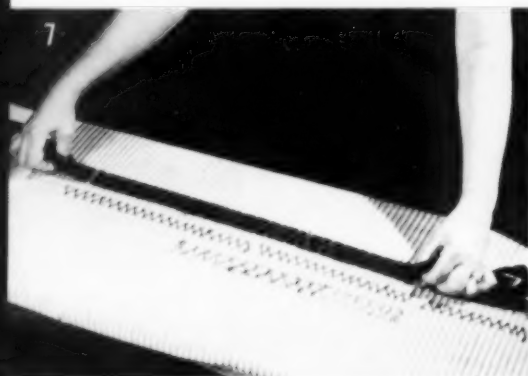
Whatever material you use, make the folded strips in one rug the same width, about  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch for a wool rug.

Tear or cut: heavy-weight material into strips 2 to  $2\frac{1}{4}$  inches wide  
medium-weight material into strips 3 inches wide  
light-weight material into strips 6 inches wide

### Join strips

Join strips of one color with a bias seam: place two strips of the fabric with the right sides together, the second piece placed on the top and at right angles to the first. Allow edges to overlap  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch and pin (figure 1). Turn pinned strips to the right side to be sure edges are continuous (figure 2). Stitch several seams at a time and then snip them apart (figure 3). Trim the seams to about  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch (figure 4). Press the seams open (figure 5).





### Fold strips

Make a gauge for folding strips; you can use heavy ticking, a piece large enough to pin around your ironing board—about 30 inches wide and 1 yard long. On this ticking, draw parallel lines for three gauges, one  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches wide, one  $\frac{7}{8}$  inch, and the third 1 inch wide. Cross-stitch with heavy thread, being sure to keep the ticking flat.

After the gauge is made, pull medium-weight 3 inch strips underneath the stitching of the  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch gauge (figure 7).

6



A



B

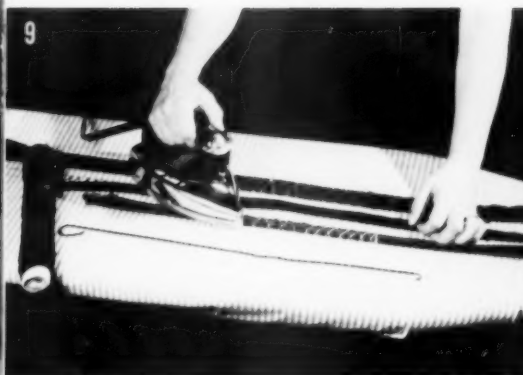


C

Cut edges should meet in the center as in figure 6, A and B. Steam press. Then bring the folded edges together as in figure 6, C, by pulling the strip through the  $\frac{7}{8}$  inch gauge. (Or, if the material is soft and pliable, you can steam press this fold without using the gauge.) A hook can be made from a coat hanger to pull the strip through the gauge (figure 8).

Wiry and bulky materials which have been cut 2 to 2 $\frac{1}{4}$  inches wide are first put through the  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch gauge and then through the 1 inch gauge. Thin material that is cut 6 inches wide is first folded into a 3 inch strip; then it is pulled first through the  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch and next through the  $\frac{7}{8}$  inch gauges, as above.

After the first pressing, press the strips, as many as three at a time, with a steam iron (figure 9).



### Roll strips

Wind strips of one color together. One easy way is to roll a thin magazine, about 12 inches long, for a foundation, or use a mailing tube about 1 inch in diameter. Hold the end of the strip even and smooth around the magazine; turn the magazine, crossing the strips to hold the end in place (figure 10).

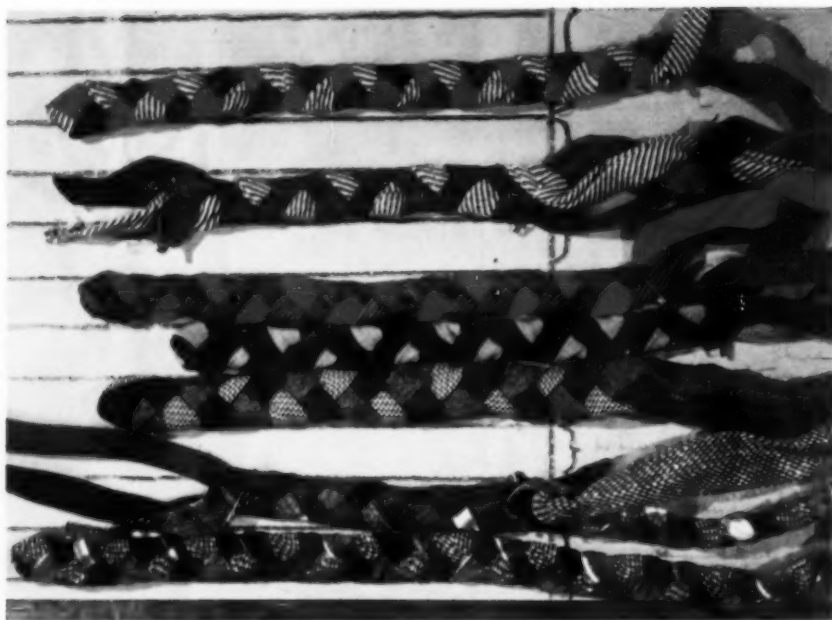


Continue rolling the strip taut around the magazine, keeping the folded edges together (figure 11). Strips pressed and rolled in this way will be easy to braid.

### SORT COLORS

One color, or variations of it, should be used throughout the rug; this means that about half of the material assembled for the rug should be of this color. The other half can be about 35 per cent of a second color and 15 per cent of a bright accent color. Sort and pile the rolls and extra fabric accordingly, as in figure 12.



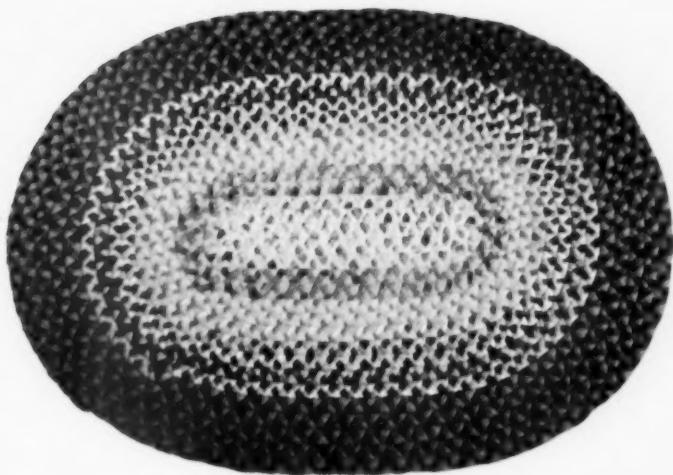


A

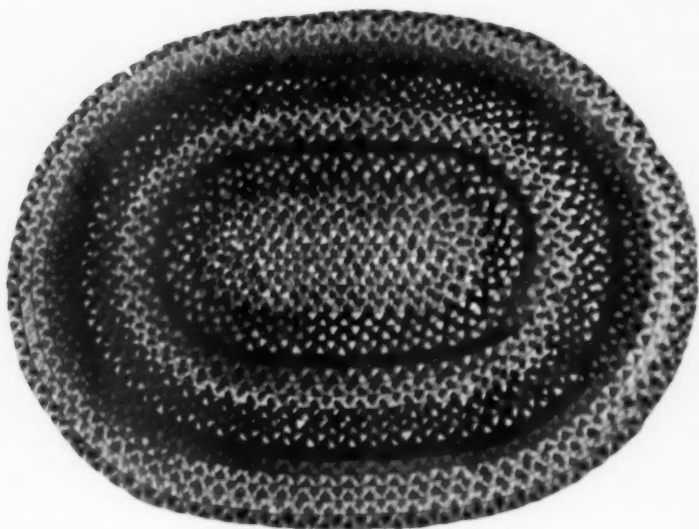


B





C



D

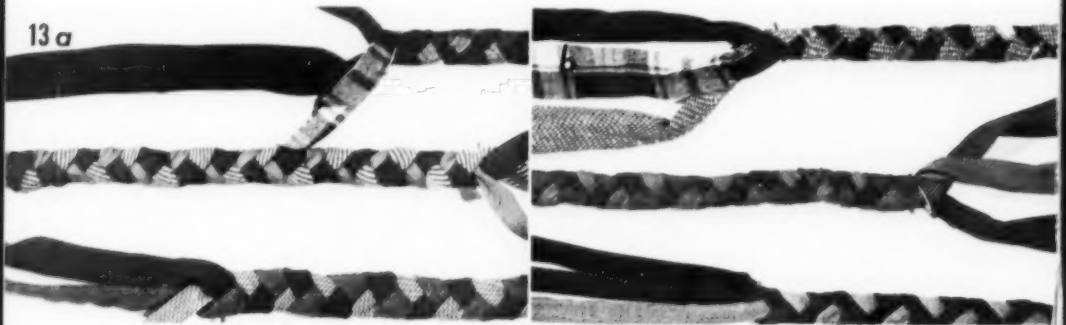
## MAKE SAMPLE BRAIDS

Make sample braids to see how well the colors combine. For the first braid, choose one color from each of the three piles. Braid them together for about 6 inches (see page 12). Fasten the end with a clothespin, safety pin, or a rubber band.

Choose colors from the materials you have and make other sample braids. Try combinations such as:

- 2 strips of plain materials and 1 of figured material
- 2 strips of figured material and 1 of plain material
- 2 strips of neutral color and 1 of brighter color
- 3 strips of different colors

From these sample braids, select three or four braids which go well together in color and pattern (figure 13).



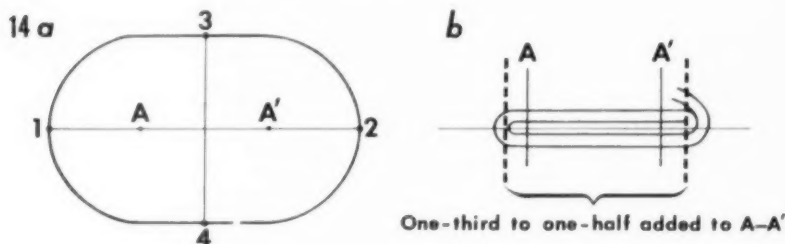
## PLAN SIZE AND DESIGN OF OVAL RUG

### Make paper pattern

Plan the size and shape of the rug in proportion to the room and the space where it will be used. Make a paper pattern; if you do not have a large enough piece, pin together garment bags, newspapers, or the like.

For an oval rug, the length of the center braid determines the final length and width of the finished rug. Draw the center lines 1-2 and 3-4 as shown in figure 14a. Subtract the width (3-4) from the length (1-2). The remaining A-A' will be the finished length of the center of the rug. Because the rug widens faster than it lengthens, as the braids are sewn, add one-third to one-half more to the measurement A-A' for the length of the center braid.

*For example*, if the length of the rug is to be 54 inches, and the width 36 inches, the difference between the two is 18 inches. Make the center braid 24 inches to 27 inches long, as in figure 14b.



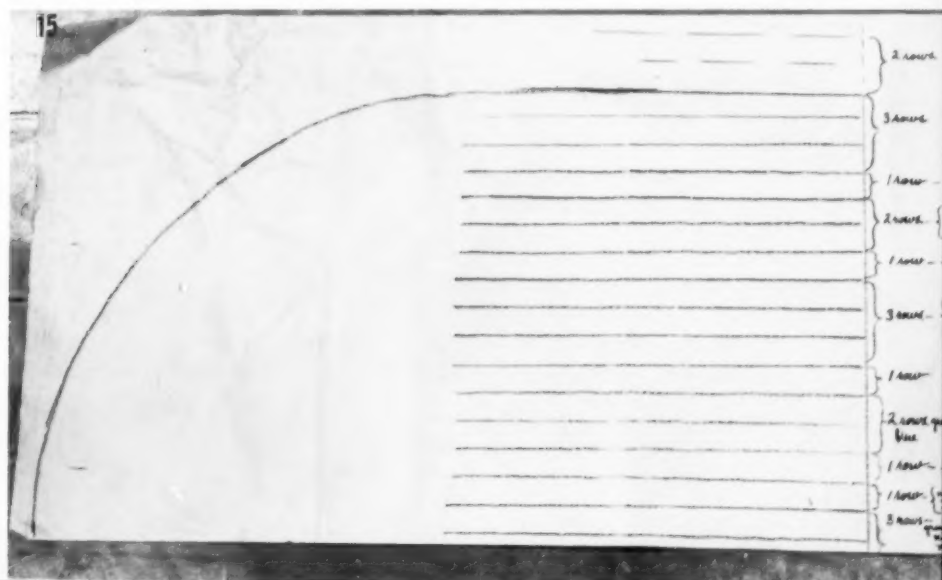
Now, to plan your color groupings, draw horizontal lines the width of the braid on one-quarter of your paper pattern. If you plan 3 similar braids at the center, this pattern will show only  $1\frac{1}{2}$  braids (figure 15).

Count the number of rows needed. Divide this number into groups or single rows and bracket them. Vary the number of rows in each group to avoid monotony.

### Select colors and patterns of braids

Using sample braids, determine the color distribution.

The number of center braids and of border braids depends on the size and design of the rug. Centers and borders vary in size but, to hold the color design together, repeat some of the groups of braids at least twice in the rug—once in an area of several rows and again in another area of one or a few rows. (See colored plate A, page 8). Write the colors you choose opposite each bracket (figure 15).





## BRAID THE RUG

### Make braids

To braid easily without tangling, one strip should be short—1 yard to two yards; the other two can be longer, of indefinite length. Hand-sew the ends of two strips in a bias seam (or use one long strip if you are braiding two colors only). Insert the end of the third strip at right angles to the joined strip, near the joining, with the open edge to the right (figure 16). Hand-sew to secure the strips (figure 17).

Fold the right angle strip toward you, over the horizontal ones (figure 18). This strip will be the middle strip of the braid. With your right hand, bring end 2 across end 1; with your left hand, bring end 3 across end 2 (figure 19). Then cross end 1 over 3 and continue (figure 20). The folded edges rather than the open edges are on the outside edge of the braid so that later you can sew braids together easily. (Or, if you prefer to lace, see page 14.) To make a firm braid, fasten the beginning of the braid to a strong support, such as a table top, with a screw clamp. Or, loop a strong cord through the end of the braid and tie the cord to a strong support. Pull each strip to make the braid firm, smooth, and uniform.

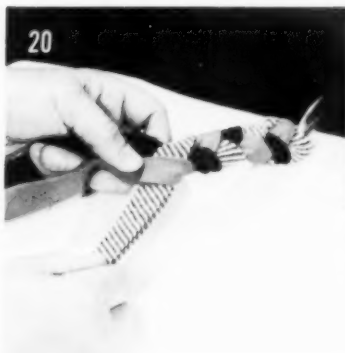
Continue the braid until it is the length your color plan requires. You may have to join additional strips (see page 14).

Make a braid more than twice as long as the planned center, about 3 yards for the rug illustrated. Remember to allow  $\frac{1}{3}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$ , in addition to the measured length, so that the center will be the desired length when the rug is completed. See figure 14b—note that the braid is doubled together so that the end is inside the dotted lines and the loop outside.

19



20



21



Place the braid on the table, wrong side up. Use a doubled length of strong mercerized thread, about 12 inches long, of a color to harmonize with the braid; wax the thread to avoid knots. Run a gathering thread on the inside edge of the looped braid for about 5 inches (figure 21).

Draw the thread tight so that the two braids are side by side. Shape the braids with your fingers until the looped end lies flat (figure 22).

22



#### Fasten braids together

*To sew* braids together, use double strands of strong linen or carpet thread, waxed, and a sturdy round-eyed needle with an eye large enough for the thread (such as No. 1 Viking needle from a ten-cent store). Beginning at the looped end, and with the braids wrong side up, sew between them. Use a blind or slip stitch to protect the stitches from wear and to make the rug reversible. Keep stitches in the center of the braid's edge about  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch in length, and sew into two materials when you can (figure 23). Be sure to pull the thread tight enough to hold the braids close together but not so tight that the rug is drawn up or cupped. If the edges are wavy, you have allowed too much fullness. Every 2 or 3 inches, take a backstitch to reinforce the thread and keep the tension uniform.

23



Sew the braids together on the wrong side and counterclockwise, as was indicated in figure 14b. Braid about  $\frac{1}{2}$  yard to 1 yard ahead of



sewing. Hold the braid in your left hand, easing it to the rug, and turn the rug as you work, so you can sew toward you. (If you are left-handed, then reverse this procedure). Sew the braids together, nearly to the starting point.

Use another gathering thread for this turn of the braid (figure 24). Draw the loop tight and flat (figure 25). Continue sewing braids together. Or, after the first two rows you may prefer to lace rather than sew.

*To lace*, insert the end of the strip (figure 16) with open edges to the left. Braid with all open edges to the left. (This is the right side of the rug.) Sew the first two rows. Then lace from the right side with a bodkin or long blunt needle and strong thread or narrow tape. Fasten the end with a slip knot drawn tight. Lace clockwise, inserting the bodkin first in the braid you are attaching, and then in the loop of the braid opposite, each time from the center to the edge. Pull thread tightly, forcing braids close together, and continue lacing. For fullness around the ends, lace through the same loop in the inner braid two or three times. Be sure the rug lies flat.

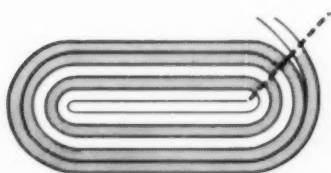
### **Add a strip to the braid**

To lengthen a strip, cut the ends of the old and new strips on the true bias. Hand-sew them together with a thread of harmonizing color, and crease the seam open. To avoid bulges in the finished braid, try not to make more than one joining at one place in the braid.

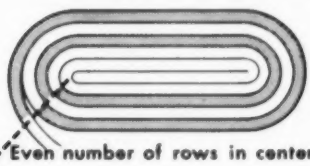
### **Change color**

Make all changes of color on a curve of the rug in a diagonal line with the end of the center braid (figure 27). Join the new color and continue braiding.

27

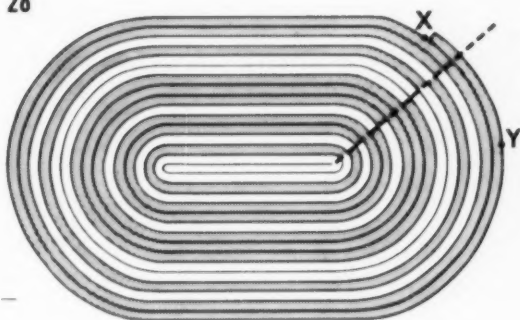


Odd number of rows in center



Even number of rows in center

28



The number of center rows—odd or even—  
determines the line of all color changes

### End the braid

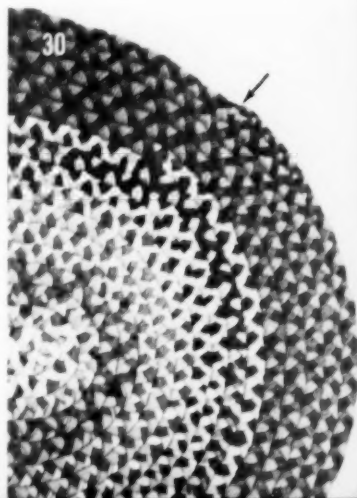
The end of the braid where the rug is to be finished should taper; the length of the tapering depends on the size of the rug. For a 4-foot-by-5-foot rug, or a larger one, the braid should decrease in size for about 1½ feet. For smaller rugs, the taper can be shorter.

The taper will end near the line of change of color; often it is less conspicuous if brought around on the large side of the rug (figure 28). Extend the full-sized braid about as far as X. Then ravel the braid back about 2 feet (Y, figure 28) and pin the strands together to keep the braid firm. To taper the ends of each strand, open the strand, fold it in the center, and then pin the raw edges together. Beginning where the raw edges start, cut each strip to a long tapering point. Refold the strands, baste them flat, braid, and sew them to the rug, to about 4 to 6 inches from the end. Poke the end of each strip separately into a different opening of the braid beside it (figure 29). Cross strand 1 over 2, toward the rug, under 3, and between the strands of braid at A. Twist strands 2 and 3 once together, and insert strand 3 at B and strand 2 between the folds at C. Pull tight, conceal under the folds, and sew securely in place, with no raw ends showing (figure 30).

29



30



## PLAN A ROUND RUG



31

Follow the same directions given for the oval rug in planning, braiding, sewing or lacing, and finishing a round rug. Sew the center in a circle rather than an oval. Coil the closed end of the braid into a tight, round flat center (figure 31). Use a gathering thread as before. Start at the closed end, and ease the fullness to prevent cupping and to make the rug lie flat. Always work on a flat surface. After the first few rows, you may prefer to lace rather than sew braids together.

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